



## Vegware

The Yard is fortunate to receive a £150 per month from Vegware Community Fund. On behalf of everyone here at The Yard, thank you for these generous donations and for your continued support. Please see below for an update on The Yard.

## The Yard

Over the past year, The Yard has continued to support disabled children, young people and their families in the east of Scotland in accordance with Scottish Government Covid-19 guidelines. Despite having to adapt our services throughout the pandemic, we have had a successful year and have loved welcoming our families back to our services. At present, all of our services for families are back to being delivered in-person at our centres, although we are still running some of our training courses online. Our current services include family sessions in Edinburgh, Dundee and Fife, schools sessions in Edinburgh and Dundee, Fun & Friendship sessions for disabled young people in Edinburgh, early years sessions and outreach in Edinburgh and disability training courses.

Here are some of our highlights from the past year:

- In May 2021, we welcomed our members back in-person to our family sessions, and we successfully continued our pre-booking allocation system to adhere to Covid-19 capacity limits.
- We continued to work closely with the City of Edinburgh Council to support some of the most vulnerable disabled children in the city through the pandemic. This includes a new specialist outreach holiday respite service.
- Over the summer and autumn in 2021, our early years sessions and sessions for disabled teenagers in Edinburgh returned to in-person delivery after having been run online during the pandemic. Our members loved meeting up with their friends again!
- We started a weekly Early Years outreach service at Clovenstone Community Centre, to target families who might benefit from additional support.
- Our new position of Specialist Support Manager has improved and increased our family support offering, helping families tackle the specific challenges arising from Covid-19.
- Over Christmas 2021, we transformed all three of our centres into Festive Wonderland Walk Throughs, so our families could experience a safe, welcoming and inclusive festive celebration despite ongoing Covid-19 restrictions.
- Despite The Yard Edinburgh being vandalised in late 2021, we were overwhelmed by our amazing community rallying around us and helping us to build back stronger afterwards.
- In early 2022, we recommenced our taster sessions for families, extending our reach to new members at all three sites. We have had 16 new member families at The Yard Fife.
- In Dundee, our schools sessions are running incredibly successfully, with all of the slots being oversubscribed and young people from new schools accessing the service every term.
- In March 2022, The Yard won the Service Excellence Award at the Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce Business Awards. This is a huge testament to our skilled and dedicated team who have adapted services and continued to support our community throughout Covid-19.



## Family Sessions

The Yard's family sessions have run successfully over the past year. The donations from Vegware have helped us to provide this service. As mentioned above, we reopened to our member families in all three sites in May 2021 after the winter lockdown. During the lockdown, we were working with the City of Edinburgh Council to support the most vulnerable disabled children in the city, providing sessions for up to 5 children per day at The Yard Edinburgh. Since May 2021, our family sessions have been limited in capacity and had to be pre-booked due to Covid-19 restrictions; over the year we increased the maximum capacity in line with the guidelines. We were delighted to welcome our member families back and offered them a range of creative and adventurous activities at every session.



Over the last year our family service has had a considerable positive impact on our member families and those who have come to the service through our 'most vulnerable families' program in partnership with the City of Edinburgh Council. Through targeted support and consistent contact with our families throughout the year, whether that be via Keep In Touch calls or in-person sessions, we have ensured the following outcomes for our families:

- Disabled children who had experienced months of social isolation due to Covid-19 were able to access a fully Covid-19 safe accessible indoor and outdoor play space to gain more self-confidence and self-esteem;
- These children also gained increased access to physical activities (dependent on ability) to increase their motor skills;
- Disabled children and young people gained social and emotional skills as they returned to interacting with peers, other families and The Yard staff;
- Our families were able to create and/or re-establish support networks through which they could meet others in similar situations, relieving stress and creating an organic community of support.

*"A safe visit to The Yard has given my son a positive sense of routine and structure to focus on during a very unstructured time with zero routine. It may only be two hours but those two hours set him up for a much more positive day and night. He is so happy to see The Yard on his 'now and next' board and he is much happier and less anxious after our visits. It makes such a dramatic difference to easing his anxiety."* – Family Service Feedback

## Looking to the future

As we transition out of Covid-19, The Yard is in an excellent position to continue and enhance our work supporting disabled children, young people and their families through 2022 and beyond. At our AGM in March 2022, our Chair, Ian Vann, stepped down after serving in this position for seven years. He has successfully led The Yard through a significant period of growth, as well as through the pandemic, and has achieved so much in the role, not least playing the role of Signalong Santa at many of our Christmas parties. Going forward, our current Board member, Ian Harris, will take over as Interim Chair before we appoint a new Chair later in the year.



In addition to this, over the next few months we aim to remove the current restrictions on our services that are in place due to Covid-19. Starting from mid-April, we will increase the capacity limit at our family sessions from 25 young people to 40 in Edinburgh and from 15 to 25 in both Fife and Dundee. We have also removed the limitations on number of family members allowed to attend per disabled child, our members can now bring several family members including siblings. The next block of sessions will also be the last to require pre-booking, and we will trial a hybrid model allowing for both drop-in and allocated slots. By summer, we aim to return to fully drop-in family sessions, as it was before Covid-19. We continue to place emphasis on whole family support, which is why new and existing members will receive more tailored support, including a thorough tour and taster session (for new members), tailored family support plans and regular check-ins with our experienced staff team.



We will continue to work hand in hand with our partner local authorities to develop new services, supporting disabled children and young people at risk of exclusion and social isolation. This will include our specialist holiday provision, our work with schools and our work with vulnerable families, as well as a potential new respite club for disabled young people funded by SDS income. This means our income will continue to be a mix of local authority contract funding, fundraised income, and income that we generate ourselves through membership and training. Overall, this model increases our financial stability and sustainability, whilst also allowing us to reach new families through our high quality model of support.

Finally, our plans to expand our services in Dundee and into the west of Scotland are still in the pipeline, however they were delayed by Covid-19. Over the next year, we plan to finalise the transfer of Linn Park in Glasgow to The Yard as well as to re-start our campaign to fund a new The Yard in Dundee. This expansion will allow us to extend our reach and effective model of support to more disabled children, young people and their families in Scotland.

### **Thank you**

On behalf of everyone here at The Yard, I would like to thank the Vegware Community Fund for your generous support. Without such funders, we would not be able to deliver our valuable service model which benefits the lives of thousands of disabled children, young people and their families. Thank you.

